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update

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Humanitarian aid for Albania

The Office for Project Services of UNDP is assisting the Government of Albania with the provision and distribution of emergency humanitarian assistance to populations not reached by existing relief programmes.

Financed with ECU 1,000,000 (approximately US$1.25 million) from the Commission of the European Communities, the programme is contracting non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which will provide drinking water, housing, first aid kits, cooking utensils and health services to the poorest Albanian communities.

Over the next four months, UNDP field offices will review requests for assistance, evaluate NGO proposals, recommend contracts, assure field monitoring of the activities, and oversee administrative and financial records. Eligible NGOs are those with headquarters in Brussels or those based in Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia.

UNDP acts to protect the ozone layer

UNDP will be providing technical assistance to help 22 countries replace and phase-out chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), halons and other ozone-depleting substances. The $4.7 million UNDP 1992 work plan was approved at the sixth meeting of the Executive Committee of the Montreal Protocol on the Protection of the Ozone Layer held in Montreal on 27-28 February. The Protocol, ratified by 75 countries, calls for the phase-out of all ozone-depleting substances by the year 2000.

The UNDP work plan will be financed from an Interim Multilateral Fund, set up by the Protocol, which helps compensate developing countries for the technical and financial costs of switching to substitute chemicals or processes which do not deplete the ozone layer.

UNDP will help Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Iran, Kenya, Sri Lanka and Trinidad and Tobago include activities to phase out ozone-depleting substances in their country programmes. Related technical assistance will be provided to Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Ghana, Jordan, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, Thailand, Turkey, Uruguay and Venezuela. The aim will be to help these countries eliminate ozone-depleting substances in aerosols, mobile air-conditioners, refrigerators, polyurethane foams, solvents and halons.

A key feature of the work plan is a $966,000 programme in China, a major producer and user of ozone-depleting substances, to help phase-out the harmful chemicals.

In Egypt, $1.5 million will be used to assist in the preparation of three investment projects: the phase-out of ozone-depleting substances in foam production, the use of non-ozone depleting substances in plastics production, and recycling and disposal of CFCs in refrigeration.

Technology bank seeks potential technology exchanges

UNDP's Division for the Private Sector in Development has initiated an innovative means for helping companies in advanced developing countries form business partnerships with small and mid-sized companies in industrialized nations. The Technology Rights Bank (TRB) will search for appropriate technologies, develop and structure joint business ventures, and help finance projects with its own funds or by attracting other investors.

Initially operating in Mexico and Thailand, the TRB will expand its network to other countries. It will search for technologies in such areas as environmental protection, health care, agricultural and manufacturing productivity, and transportation and communications efficiency.

Under development for more than two years, the programme is now producing results. One of its first deals, under negotiation, involves a US company which has developed a pollution-free washing machine. By injecting ozone gas, a cleansing agent, into the water, the machine completely eliminates the need for detergents. Several Mexican institutions have shown an interest in funding a venture which will bring this technology to Mexico.

The TRB will be organized as a network of local affiliates located in each participating recipient country. The network will track down technologies through a central TRB, based in the US. The local TRBs will be set up as separate corporations or trusts, primarily owned by local management and investors.

Start-up funding for TRB has been provided by a UNDP-administered associated fund, the UN Fund for Science and Technology for Development and by UNDP's Division for Global and Interregional Programmes.

In this issue:

projects approved: **Rehabilitation for Afghanistan • Monitoring economic reform in Egypt • Immunization in Mali • Peru improves aeronautical training • Development for Viet Nam's Red River Delta • Caribbean gets new disaster-related information systems • Global Environment Facility issues small grants • Assistance to Rwandan refugees**

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Small projects will help cities clean up their environments

UNDP will launch a new programme to support small-scale environmental projects designed by NGOs, community groups and municipal authorities. The Local Initiative Facility for Urban Environment (LIFE) will assist organizations in tackling critical urban environmental issues including urban waste, contaminated water, and air pollution. Projects geared toward environmental health and education, development of environmentally-sound technologies and environmental planning will also be eligible for support from LIFE. The initiative will be announced in May in Curitiba, Brazil at the World Urban Forum, an official UNCED event.

The first five-year phase of LIFE will be set up with $15 million, from which individual grants up to $50,000 will be awarded to selected community-based organizations and NGOs. Support will also be given to promote regional and interregional exchanges of experience. The aim is to promote "local-local" dialogue to help find solutions to pressing urban environmental problems.

Along with UNDP, various bilateral donors, including the Netherlands, have shown strong interest in supporting the fund. On 24-25 February, a consultation was held at UNDP headquarters with mayors and representatives of cities' associations, NGO networks and bilateral donors to complete the programme design. Another consultation will be held for UN specialized agencies at UNDP headquarters on 26 March.

For further information on LIFE, call Mr. G. Shabbir Cheema, (212) 906-5054.

Rejuvenation of the ailing jute industry

The Government of India has approached UNDP's Division for the Private Sector in Development for help in revitalizing its jute industry. Jute is the most-used vegetable fibre in the world after cotton, but its product line is extremely limited and shrinking rapidly as synthetic alternatives swallow traditional markets in the industrialized countries. New products are essential to revitalize the industry.

The five-year $45 million programme, expected to be launched in mid-1992, is now in final stages of negotiations. The large-scale effort could revolutionize the manufacture and marketing of new jute products. Through the creation of a National Centre for Jute Diversification, with offices in Calcutta and New Delhi, the programme will provide a total management system which will transfer technology from research and development to private sector production. International experts from the private sector will provide market research, identify new product lines, and design marketing and promotional strategies.

UNDP hosted a brainstorming session two years ago to address ways of reviving international interest in jute fibre. Held in New York, the gathering was attended by chemical engineers, designers, textile manufacturers, building trade experts, furniture manufacturers and marketing specialists. They produced a list of new jute product lines which range from molded furniture and modular housing components, to automobile components and clothing.

The UNDP programme will affect the lives of more than 20 million people in the jute sector in India. It will have a ripple effect on the lives of millions more who work with handlooms, powerlooms, crafts, garments, packaging and exports.

Projects approved

(all projects subject to modification; sums quoted in US dollars)

Afghanistan — Rural Afghanistan has been devastated by war over the last 13 years. Restoring basic rural infrastructure and food production capabilities in eastern Afghanistan is the primary goal of this project. Last year, 158 NGOs were subcontracted to rehabilitate crops, irrigation systems and roads. This extension project will strengthen the technical and administrative skills of Afghan NGOs. Funds will also be provided to subcontract small NGOs based in Pakistan.

Increased UNDP contribution: $5.3 million to finance services of a project manager and a team of experts in agronomy, irrigation, animal husbandry and civil engineering. Additional third-party cost-sharing from the UN Humanitarian and Economic Assistance Programmes Relating to Afghanistan: $300,000 for services of consultants and a subcontract for an ongoing programme for the disabled. Executed by UNDP's Office for Project Services (OPS). (AFG/88/001)

Egypt — Egypt has no single agency to monitor the country's economic reform and structural adjustment programme. To build such a facility, this project will establish a Technical Secretariat, supported by a team of economists. They will gather economic data for formulating macro-economic policies. Training will be provided to help improve the data collection and analysis capabilities of relevant ministries.

UNDP contribution: $780,000. Other donors: European Community - $800,000, African Development Bank (AfDB) - $500,000. UNDP funds will cover the Secretariat's staff, consisting of three senior economists and seven statisticians. Contributions from AfDB will finance special studies and advisory services. The European Community will pay for staff salaries and training. Government-executed and implemented by the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs and Administrative Development. (EGY/91/007)

Mali — UNDP assistance is aimed at helping to immunize at least 80 per cent of Mali's children and women of child-bearing age against infectious diseases by the year 2000. The National Immunization Center will receive management training. Vaccination facilities will be established at regional health centres.

UNDP contribution: $1,060,000. The World Health Organization

(WHO) will provide $350,000 and UNICEF will contribute $800,000. Funds will be used for an epidemiologist, consultants and administrative personnel. They will also pay for equipment, eight medical assistants, and local training of medical doctors, nurses and midwives.

Government-executed in cooperation with WHO. Implemented by the Social Affairs and Women's Promotion, Ministry of Health. (MLI/91/006)

Peru — Technical assistance under this follow-up phase will help ensure that the National Aeronautical Navigation Plan meets international standards. An information management system for airport administration and procedures will be developed. The Centre for Aeronautical Training will be strengthened through training courses and new equipment.

UNDP contribution: $300,000. Government cost-sharing: $1,785,465. Third-party cost-sharing from Spain: $707,965. Funds are to pay for advisory services in telecommunications, electronic engineering, meteorology, information systems and civil aviation planning. Executed by the International Civil Aviation Organization and implemented by the Corporación Peruana de Aeropuertos y Aviación Comercial S.A. (PER/91/018)

Viet Nam — A master plan for the sustainable development of the Red River Delta will be designed with UNDP assistance. Studies will assess available data on land, water, mineral and human resources in the region. Investment plans will be formulated and feasibility studies devised for projects suitable for international financing. The aim will be to provide employment, increase rural income and improve the living standards of 16 million people.

UNDP contribution: $2.9 million for national and international experts and subcontracts to consulting firms. Funds will also cover fellowships, study tours, training, data processing, transportation and equipment. Executed by the World Bank and implemented by the State Committee for Sciences. (VIE/89/034)

Regional project:

Latin America and the Caribbean — Caribbean countries are extremely vulnerable to natural disasters such as hurricanes and tropical storms. In response to these recurring disasters, the heads of governments in the Caribbean formed the Caribbean Disaster Response Agency in Bridgetown, Barbados. At the national level, this project will assist in the installation of new computerized information systems at ministries responsible for health, consumer affairs and public works in 14 participating countries. These information systems will enhance the coordination and management of international relief assistance in the region.

UNDP contribution: $955,400 for UN Volunteers, consultants and national experts in electronic data processing and information management, geographic information systems, disaster management and public service administration. Executed by the Caribbean Community Secretariat and implemented by national disaster focal points in each country. (RLA/91/030)

Interregional projects:

INT/92/G31 — A small-grants programme under the Global Environment Facility (GEF) will be launched under the project. Small grants will be awarded to community groups and NGOs to test and demonstrate activities that could reduce threats to the global environment if they were extended or replicated on a larger scale. The GEF small-grants programme will be carried out at two levels: grants of $1,000 to $50,000 will support national projects, and those ranging from $50,000 to $250,000 will be awarded to sub-regional and regional efforts. Thirty-five countries will be participating in the pilot phase. National committees will be established to screen and select activities for awards.

UNDP contribution: $5 million. Funds will cover personnel, selection committee operations, grants, training and administrative services. Executed by UNDP/OPS.

INT/91/707 — Under the project, socio-economic studies and demographic profiles of 500,000 Rwandan refugees living in Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zaire will be conducted. Projects will be identified to help with the repatriation and reintegration of these refugees into the Rwandan economy. Projects will also be identified which will help Rwandans assimilate into the host communities where they now live.

Funds of $246,640 from UNDP's Special Programme Resources will be used to finance needs assessment missions in Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda. The mission team will consist of an economist, a specialist in infrastructure projects and a sociologist. Funds will also pay for specialists in census data collection and analysis. Executed by UNDP/OPS.

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One UN Plaza
New York, NY 10017

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